

System Configuration Team (SCT)

Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26

Meeting Notes

December 8, 1999

DRAFT

Greetings and Introductions.

The December 8 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the National Marine Fisheries Service offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and was facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The agenda and a list of attendees for the October 20 meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

I. John Day Surface Bypass Development.

John Kranda of COE said the issue raised by CRITFC at the last SCT meeting was the possibility of accelerating the schedule for design and construction of the raised-crest prototype at John Day so that the prototype test could be conducted in 2001, rather than 2002. We asked FFDRWG to take that issue up at yesterday's meeting, Kranda said; the upshot is that the Corps is recommending that we stay on track to test the prototype in 2002, because of the design complexities involved. It was agreed at yesterday's FFDRWG discussion that the 2002 schedule probably makes the most sense, in terms of delivering a product the Corps is comfortable with, Kranda said. It was also pointed out at the meeting that there may be useful information generated by the upcoming test at Lower Granite, which could help make the John Day prototype better, Hevlin observed.

Do we have SCT support of FFDRWG's recommendation that the John Day raised-crest prototype test be conducted in 2002? Hevlin asked. No objections were raised to Hevlin's question.

II. Update on The Dalles Trashrack Occlusion for Surface Bypass Evaluation in 2000.

Kranda said there are some issues related to the design and shape of the trashrack block, and to the Corps' ability to conduct a valid test program this year, given the information coming from the project operators about the challenges involved in the removal and installation of the block in the course of one-day-on, one-day-off testing. The Corps' Rock Peters said his agency has delayed the contract for this work until December 15, pending review of the design at WES by the Corps and other agencies next week.

The worst-case scenario is that, if we can't resolve these design and logistical concerns, we may have to consider scrubbing the test for this year, Kranda said. Next week's trip to WES is critical, in terms of looking at the available options, he said; at this point, however, the bottom line is that the Corps is not seriously entertaining the possibility of scrubbing the test in 2000. Will the recommendations from the trip to WES be brought back to FFDRWG for further discussion? asked Ron Boyce of ODFW. Yes, Peters replied.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the technical details of the proposed test; ultimately, Hevlin reiterated that FFDRWG and the SRWG will make a recommendation on this issue following next week's site visit to WES; because a decision about the 2000 blocked trashrack test will need to be made prior to the January SCT meeting, Hevlin said the SCT will support whatever recommendation is made by FFDRWG and SRWG. No disagreements were raised to this statement.

III. General Update on FY-00 CRFM Program.

As you'll recall, said Hevlin, at the last meeting, we agreed to keep this item as a regular update, to keep the SCT apprized of any changes in scope or cost for the FY-00 CRFM program items. Kranda distributed an updated FY-00 CRFM spreadsheet (Enclosure C); he noted that all changes have been highlighted in grey. The group spent a few minutes discussing the IT's request that the SCT provide a review of the FY-99 CRFM program; ultimately, Hevlin asked Kranda to provide him a copy of the final FY-99 accounting, so that he can present it to IT.

Kranda then spent a few minutes going through the marked alterations to the FY-00 CRFM program; the changes are to the McNary orifice shelters study, the John Day monitoring facility, the John Day flow deflectors (navigational impacts) study, the John Day spillway surface bypass study, the John Day biological studies, the Bonneville PH1 DSM, monitoring and outfall

relocation, the Bonneville PH2 gatewell debris cleaning study, the Bonneville surface bypass

study, the Bonneville adult fallback study, the Bonneville spillway efficiency/survival studies, the Bonneville gas fast track study, the Lower Snake River Feasibility study, the System B automated trash rakes line-item, and the Snake River Drawdown PED.

Overall, said Kranda, the cost of the FY=00 program has decreased from the \$77 million we had originally discussed to about \$74 million. We still don't have enough funds to cover even that reduced program amount, however, he said. At this point, it looks as though we will have about \$71 million available.

The group devoted an extensive discussion to the Little Goose trash shear boom line-item; Mike Mason explained that, normally, projects of this type go through the Regional Forum/FFDRWG process. As an adjunct to that process, said Mason, the State of Washington requires a hydraulic permit before in-water project modification work begins. For legal reasons, the Corps does not seek state hydraulic permits; however, we usually make sure we have adequate coordination with the appropriate state biologist, in this case, Paul LaRiviere of Kennewick. For whatever reason, in the case of the Little Goose project, the State of Washington is taking exception to our proposed design, Mason said. They didn't like our method of anchoring; in addition, Washington would like the Corps to use steel, rather than concrete, floats, with a grating to allow sunlight to penetrate the structure to discourage lurking predators.

We have been discussing these concerns with the state, Mason continued; they were firm in their position, however, and last Friday issued a denial of the permit for this work. It's a problem, because if we proceed with this work, our contractor would be in violation of state law, Mason said. The Corps' position is that the criteria the state is using to deny a permit for this work are typically applied to boat docks, and do not apply to this structure; we could argue and appeal, but that would take time.

Instead, the Corps has agreed to make the changes Washington is requesting to the anchoring system and the floats, Mason said. We have issued what's called a partial termination to our contractor, ordering him to put a stop on his concrete procurement. There will be some additional costs incurred as a result of this situation; we won't know how much until we can sit down with the contractor to see what his expenses have been to this point. We will also be changing the design and contract so that the resulting structure meets the state's requirements, Mason said, a process that could take anywhere from a month to six weeks. Washington has agreed to extend the work window to get the redesigned structure in place, said Mason; we'll go ahead and put the anchors in right away.

On the positive side, he said, we were able to resolve this issue; on the negative side, the cost of this project is going to increase, by an unknown amount. We will be working with the state to ensure that, if such design disagreements arise in the future, they are brought to our

attention sooner, so that they can be resolved before the contractor begins work, Mason said. I

would echo that sentiment, said Jim Nielsen of WDFW, and Washington appreciates the Corps' willingness to consider alternatives.

When I know what the cost increase is going to be, I will update the cost estimate for this item in the FY-00 spreadsheet, said Mason. There was general agreement that the SCT needs to take a holistic look at debris removal problems in the system, and that a more general discussion of this topic should be placed on the agenda for the January or February SCT meeting.

IV. Bonneville PH2 FGE Improvement Proposal.

The Corps' Doug Clarke distributed Enclosure D, a description of the proposed program direction for the fish guidance efficiency improvements at Bonneville's second powerhouse, as well as Enclosure E, a proposed schedule for this work. My hope today is to obtain SCT concurrence with this proposed direction and schedule, he said, and to accept any feedback or suggestions you may have, so that the Corps can proceed with Phase 2 of the FGE improvements study.

Clarke noted that the final report on Phase 1 of the Bonneville PH2 FGE study will be available within a week or so; there was a special FFDRWG meeting on November 8, at which FFDRWG concurred with the technical recommendations contained in the Phase 1 report.

Clarke spent a few minutes going through the contents of Enclosures D and E, touching on some of the highlights of the Phase 1 report (not enough data to determine the exact problem or expected benefits; B2 has the lowest flow up the gateslot of all projects reviewed; proposed a number of hypotheses as to why guidance is so low), the proposed Phase 2 approach, the potential alternatives under consideration by the Corps (inside intake B VBS modifications, gateslot entrance modifications, STS modifications, SBS, alternative screen location; face of powerhouse B blocked trashracks, trashrack modifications, pier or intake extensions; forebay B sill modifications), the recommended alternative, and costs. Clarke also reviewed the Corps' recommended schedule for this work; please see Enclosures D and E for details of his presentation.

Any strong SCT objections to this course of action? Silverberg asked. None being heard, Hevlin said the Corps can now consider its planned approach endorsed by the SCT.

V. Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph Gas Abatement.

Reclamation's Kathy Frizell began this agenda item with an update on the status of the Grand Coulee gas abatement modeling effort; Hevlin distributed copies of Frizell's November 1 letter on this topic to the other SCT members (attached as Enclosure H). Frizell spent a few

minutes going through the contents of this document, touching on the current status of various

modeling components; please see Enclosure H for details of her presentation. In general, said Frizell, model investigations of Grand Coulee gas abatement are continuing; the model studies and design efforts are scheduled for completion at the end of FY=00. And Reclamation will be taking all three alternatives through the feasibility study, to at least scope the design? Hevlin asked. That=s correct, Frizell replied.

Next, Marian Valentine and Kathy Hacker went through a series of overheads detailing the current status of the Corps= Chief Joseph gas abatement study. Valentine=s and Hacker=s presentation is attached as Enclosure I; please refer to this document for details. At the end of their presentation, Hevlin said it is important to NMFS that Chief Joseph stay on the gas fast track; it may be better to wait to produce NEPA documentation until later, after the Corps has produced NEPA documentation for the gas abatement work at Grand Coulee.

VI. Update on ISAB Response to TDA Survival Studies Request.

Hevlin distributed Enclosure G, the final letter from Brian Brown to Mike Schiewe and Chip McConnaha of the ISAB, laying out the questions IT would like the ISAB to answer regarding project-specific juvenile survival studies. Just to bring you up to date, said Hevlin, the letter was sent out after the last IT meeting; two weeks ago, I received a letter from Bill Muir, saying that an ISAB subcommittee has been established to collect the information needed to conduct the requested review. In response to a request from that subcommittee, I put together a package of letters and other documents related to this issue from our SCT discussions, said Hevlin; that package is available from Kathy Ceballos if anyone would like a copy.

Subsequently, Hevlin continued, I heard back from Muir regarding the status and scope of what the ISAB review is going to be; he told me that they haven=t made much progress yet. The subcommittee has been formed to review the request; within the next couple of weeks, the subcommittee will provide answers to the following questions:

- \$ Is the assignment appropriate?
- \$ Are the questions appropriate?
- \$ If not, what are the alternatives?
- \$ What is the timeline to complete this task?

Peters warned that, unless the ISAB is able to provide an answer to the questions posed by IT within the next three to four weeks, it will be too late to modify the study design to accommodate any suggestions they may have, and the Corps will move ahead with the 2000 study as originally planned. The ISAB is aware that we need their feedback by February 1, Hevlin said; the reality is that we probably can=t expect the ISAB to give us the kind of definitive answer and guidance that some in the region would like to see in time for incorporation into the

2000 study design. At the very least, though, we will have their guidance in time for use next

year, he said.

VII. Update on SRWG Progress with FY-00 Studies.

Boyce offered some general comments on the SRWG process as a whole, saying that the number and scope of SRWG meetings is imposing a serious workload and staffing burden for Oregon. We need to streamline the process by setting better priorities and consolidating some of the meetings and subgroups to concentrate on the highest-priority items, he said. It would be helpful if a centralized body within SRWG could get together to better define the scope and direction of the effort, and to set the priorities for discussion. Rock Peters replied that the multiple SRWG subgroups were established to develop the one-page summaries of each of the research proposals; that is the only part of the SRWG process that changed last year, he said. Peters asked for specific suggestions about how the SRWG process could be improved.

IDFG's Steve Pettit said the old process of a week-long meeting to develop the one-page project summaries, enter specific agency comments into the record, and vote on controversial projects, is preferable to the new process, which is now drawn out over a month or more. If that's your preference, the Corps can develop the one-pagers for presentation at a week-long meeting, said Peters; last year's change was in response to a request from the region that other agencies be involved in the development of the one-page project summaries. My personal feeling was that last year's process led to better one-page summaries, because we were able to spend more time on the development of objectives for FY-00, Peters said.

Pettit said his objection to last year's process mainly had to do with the fact that he had to listen to detailed presentations on each research proposal, then produce extensive written comments on each one. I just don't have time to write comments on 53 20-page proposals, he said, although I agree that last year's one-pager development process was productive.

Boyce suggested that there is a missing step in the SRWG process B the one-pagers are being developed before the priorities for those research projects have been established. My suggestion is that a committee be established to determine those priorities before the one-pagers are developed, he said.

The Corps recognizes that the new demands imposed by the Biological Opinion have imposed staffing burdens on the agencies that participate in this process, said Peters; at the same time, given the tremendous amount of money being spent every year on research, it is incumbent on us to develop the best work product we can. There have been some discussions to the effect that another body B perhaps the ISAB B might be better-prepared to do the bulk of these research project reviews, Peters said. However, it isn't realistic to suggest that a problem this complex can be made more manageable if we hold shorter or fewer meetings. The Corps is willing to do

whatever is necessary to make this a better process, said Peters, but streamlining it through fewer

meetings probably isn't very realistic.

Boyce said one of his suggestions would be to decrease the level of detailed discussion on ongoing projects; these projects have already been extensively reviewed and discussed, and probably don't need to be exhaustively revisited every year. It would also be helpful if we could really consolidate the meetings and focus only on the issues, providing real-time feedback to the Corps at those meetings, said Boyce. Gary Fredricks added that, to him, preparation is the key. The process would be greatly improved simply by ensuring that the participants come to each meeting well-prepared to discuss the issues of concern. I would also suggest that we focus our efforts at the meetings mainly on studies that are on the bubble, and need immediate attention, rather than projects that enjoy strong regional support, Fredricks said.

Peters said it is important that SRWG move forward and complete its review of the FY-00 studies; the final proposals are now out for review, and the Corps had asked that comments on those proposals be submitted by December 3. We're still waiting for those comments, he said; however, the SRWG participants have already provided their lists of high, medium and low research priorities. My suggestion is that we move out with funding for those studies designated as high priorities by the region, Peters said. There are also a number of studies that are on the bubble, he continued; my suggestion is that Ron Boyce and Marv Yoshinaka set up a meeting to discuss them, and Rebecca Kalamasz and I will be there.

Boyce suggested that it would be helpful if the Corps could develop a list of those projects they intend to fund in FY-00, those they do not intend to fund, and those that are on the bubble. That kind of a snapshot of where the SRWG process is today would be extremely useful in focusing our discussions, he said. I can do that, Peters replied; Boyce and Yoshinaka said they will set up the requested meeting to discuss the remaining issues.

Peters said the Portland District studies on the FY-00 funding bubble include The Dalles/John Day survival efficiency studies (a meeting to discuss those studies is set for January 14) and The Dalles physical injury study. Kalamasz said the Walla Walla District proposals that are still under discussion include Ted Bjorn's adult radio-tracking study; the study of the effects of bypass screens on lamprey behavior and survival at McNary; the wild chinook and steelhead transportation study; the delayed mortality/multiple bypass pilot study (to be discussed in detail at the January 25-26 FFDRWG meeting in Walla Walla); the separator work proposals; the fish condition work associated with transportation; the predation evaluation at the Little Goose trash shear boom; the surface bypass collector radio telemetry and 3-D tracking studies; the high-Z tag injury study attached to the raised crest spillway study, and the turbulent flow and lights study at Cowlitz Falls.

All of these studies will be discussed in more detail at the January 25-26 FFDRWG

meeting in Walla Walla, said Kalamasz. We will develop a list of the entire study package,

highlighting those projects the Corps does and does not propose to fund in FY=00, as well as those studies that still require some further discussion, Peters said. We will then set up a conference call to discuss this list, some time in early January. We need to finalize our recommendations on all of the FY=00 studies no later than the end of January, Peters said, in part because we have to get moving on the process for FY=01 B we have to have all of the one-pagers developed by March 1, if we are to stay on what the Corps feels is a reasonable schedule.

It was also agreed that the agenda for the January SCT meeting will include a discussion of how to improve the SRWG process for FY=01; Peters said he has a one-page description of the process the Corps is proposing for FY=01, and will send it out to the other SCT participants to review within the next few days.

VIII. FFDRWG Update.

Peters distributed Enclosure F, the notes from the most recent Portland-District FFDRWG meeting on December 7; topics discussed at this meeting included the Bonneville 1 PSC 2000 test, The Dalles blocked trashrack test; the John Day spill test; the John Day surface collection/spillway weir test; the John Day ESBS; gas abatement; the Turbine Survival Program; Bonneville 2 outfall and DSM; Bonneville turbine rehab; the adult PIT program; Bonneville 1 FGE; B2 high-flow outfall and The Dalles combined system. Peters said the next Portland District FFDRWG meeting will be held on February 9, beginning at 9 a.m.; an agenda for this meeting will be sent out in the next week or so.

IX. Next SCT Meeting Dates and Agenda Items.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Thursday, January 20, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at NMFS= Portland offices. The February SCT meeting was set for Thursday, February 17. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.